



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## THE DULUTH SYSTEM FOR RATING TEACHERS

---

JOHN L. BRACKEN

U. S. Grant School, Duluth, Minnesota

---

Duluth has experienced a considerable variety of teacher-rating systems. In the main, the rating has been based on training and experience, but certain variations have occasionally been introduced. The first of these variations provided for double increases in salary which were granted by the Board of Education on the recommendation of the superintendent of schools. The last proceeded from the ruling of the Board of Education that the salaries of all teachers appointed for the school year 1921-22 should be based on their proved teaching merit.

This decision was arrived at after the usual ratings for the central office files had been executed by the principals and supervisors. The blank which was used did not lend itself readily to the ranking of teachers, and some confusion as to the officers entitled to rate certain teachers was evident. A cabinet composed of teachers, supervisors, and principals approved the final plan for the system's salary application which provided that 86 per cent of the teachers should receive the normal salary increase of \$75, that 7 per cent should receive an increase of \$125, and that the remaining 7 per cent should receive an addition of but \$25 to their salary for the next school year. This approval was given with the understanding that a rating system was inevitable and that a system affecting as small a number of teachers as possible was most advisable.

The success which attended the operation of this hastily conceived system was not remarkable. It was generally admitted that the rating system had complicated educational matters to a great extent. Accordingly, the newly elected superintendent of schools announced at the beginning of the year 1921-22 that the rating system would not operate in the adjustment of the next year's contracts and asked for the appointment of a committee from the various levels of the instructional staff to co-operate in the formation of a new rating system for teachers.

This committee was composed of ten teachers, two supervisors, and three principals elected by the various groups. The superintendent served as chairman of the committee. The committee began its work early in the year and continued almost until its close. Subcommittees were formed to collect and consider rating systems in use in other cities, to formulate the items on which teaching merit should be judged, and to devise methods for the administration of the system.

The work of these subcommittees was reviewed and revised by the general committee. Reports of all of the meetings of this committee were mimeographed and sent to the buildings as the work progressed. Discussion of the system was urged in meetings of the teachers' association and of the supervisors' and principals' clubs. After the system began to assume its final form a general meeting was held in which the superintendent presented the matter fully to the entire teaching body, inviting criticisms and suggestions.

The final report went through the hands of two subcommittees and of the committee of the whole before being presented to the committee on schools of the Board of Education. This report, involving both recommendations and the rating system proper, was unanimously adopted by the Board of Education, and plans have been made for tentative operation during the year 1922-23. The committee's recommendations and the rating system follow.

Your committee organized to formulate a plan for rating the efficiency of the teachers in the Duluth schools respectfully submits the following report. The rating system whose trial we recommend is attached hereto.

The committee has utilized in its work the experience of other cities where rating systems have, with more or less success, been placed in operation. The committee has referred the results of its deliberations to members of the teaching and supervising staff at frequent intervals, inviting and receiving criticisms and suggestions. The results of the committee's work have been made public consistently, and an open-minded attempt has been made to incorporate in this system the best thought both here and elsewhere.

The work of the committee has been directed toward the creation of a rating system whose operation will reveal teaching excellence and provide an opportunity for its suitable recognition and reward. It is hoped that this system will also assist in developing teaching merit by setting up situations in which a frank, open appraisal of a teacher's work may lead immediately to a fruitful discussion of means of improving the quality of the work.

The committee wishes to present the following recommendations in regard to the operation of this rating system. It is the sense of the committee that these recommendations are vital and that without the operation of their provisions the proposed rating system should not be put into effect.

1. We recommend that the proposed rating system be placed in complete operation at the opening of the next school year but that the ratings received by members of the teaching force during the year 1922-23 shall in no way affect the salary schedule for the year 1923-24.

2. We recommend that a statement of opinion concerning the system be received from all members of the teaching staff, from all supervisors, and from all principals before the system is in any way altered for further trial, dropped, or caused in any way to affect the salaries of teachers, this statement to be received at the close of the first year of the system's operation.

3. We recommend that a department of research be created as early as possible in order that the recent development of standardized tests and measures may be fully and effectively used in directing the emphasis of supervision and in determining the excellence of teaching.

4. We recommend that adequate supervision be provided for teachers in every department of the school system. Specifically, we recommend that heads of departments for junior and senior high school work throughout the city be appointed and that they serve in the capacity of subject supervisors. It is our opinion that each teacher should be so situated as to receive the rating of at least one supervisor other than the building principal.

5. We recommend that the election of teachers be not delayed until the completion of the ratings for the year. We suggest that, when the system is placed in complete operation, statements of election be sent to teachers at the usual time and that contracts bearing the salary determined in the light of the rating system be delivered to them two weeks after the date (May 1) on which the final ratings are due.

6. We recommend that service be provided in the office of the superintendent of schools adequate to the successful operation of the machinery of the system.

7. We recommend that transcripts of teachers' ratings and statements of their rating classification under the proposed system be not employed by the general office in answering requests for information from other cities in which they may apply for positions. The committee believes that all teachers reappointed to positions in the Duluth schools are good teachers or excellent teachers and that they should, under these circumstances, be recommended as such. It is the further belief of the committee that statements of exact ratings received under the proposed system would in many cases work an injustice when presented to school officials who are not familiar with the standards to be employed here.

8. We recommend that a rating system committee similar in constitution to your present committee be selected at the opening of the next school year and

that this committee be instructed to collect information relative to the operation of the system as the basis for a second report to your body at the close of that year.

Since the introduction of a rating system for teachers has been a source of irritation in various other cities the committee wishes to suggest that, in considering any cases of disaffection which may arise under this system, the Board of Education will bear in mind the fact that a certain amount of friction is inevitably incident to the operation of this newly-made, heretofore untried machinery.

Finally, we wish to point out the distinction between rating a teacher and recommending her for re-election. The committee wishes it clearly understood that the primary intent of the rating system is to classify those teachers whose services are to be retained during the next school year. Excellent marks on the rating cards are not a guarantee of reappointment when, in the judgment of the Board of Education, reasons sufficient to prevent the re-employment of a particular teacher are presented. The teacher who has been reappointed and who has received high ratings will, however, when the system is in complete operation, receive recognition and an increase of salary on that account. While the final ratings of teachers will not be made until after the time at which they are normally reappointed, it is nevertheless expected that the superintendent of schools will avail himself of the evidence contained in earlier ratings when he prepares the list of teachers for whose reappointment he intends to ask.

#### PROPOSED SYSTEM FOR RATING THE EFFICIENCY OF TEACHERS

The object of this rating system is to distinguish three classes of teachers among those whose work is successful and who are to be retained in the Duluth schools. These three classes are referred to as Class A, Class B, and Class C. Class B is composed of successful teachers and is expected to comprise a large majority of the entire teaching staff. A Class A teacher is one whose work is so highly successful that it may be shown to stand out clearly in the entire system. A Class C teacher is one whose work is demonstrably less successful than that of the teachers assigned to Class B. No fixed percentages of the teaching staff are to be assigned to any of these classes.

This system involves the frequent rating of each teacher throughout the year by building principals and by supervisors of departments designated by the superintendent of schools. These ratings are to be open for inspection by the teachers concerned. Each rating officer is required to make, in the light of these occasional ratings, a yearly rating for each teacher in his school or department, assigning each teacher to one of the three classes named above. These ratings will then be assembled by the superintendent of schools or by a responsible assistant and a final rating assigned by him to each teacher concerned. This final rating places teachers in Classes A, B, and C.

Teachers who have not been reappointed will not receive the yearly and the final ratings noted above. Written statements will be substituted for the occasional ratings in cases where the quality of the work is observed to be below a rating of C. It is intended that the present system of reporting on the success of teachers new to the city will be continued, and it is anticipated that the superintendent of schools may ask for a special report of those instances in which teaching merit has not reached the standard required for a C rating.

*Occasional Ratings: Form 1*

1. Frequent ratings of all teachers under their supervision shall be made by all building principals and by the supervisors of departments designated by the superintendent of schools, and the ratings shall be reported on Form 1.

In departments containing assistant supervisors, the assistants may rate teachers under their supervision at the discretion of the head of the department. The rating of a teacher by an assistant supervisor shall not, however, preclude the making of other ratings of her work by the head of the department.

2. Ratings shall be given on the main headings (five) of Form 1 and shall be in terms of A, B, and C.

3. Ratings of B require no substantiating particulars.

4. Ratings of A and C do require substantiating particulars. Such explanations may be made by checking appropriate subheadings or by making notations in the space provided for that purpose.

5. In cases where a teacher's work is unsatisfactory and does not come up to the standard required for a C rating, this fact is to be fully noted on the card, and an interview shall be held with the teacher concerning the matter as early as possible.

6. Form 1 shall be executed in triplicate. One copy shall be given to the teacher; one shall be filed in the superintendent's office; and the third shall be retained by the supervising officer.

7. Successive ratings shall be made by supervising officers without consultation with other supervisors and without reference to the previous ratings which they have given.

*Yearly Ratings: Form 2*

1. During the last week of April in each year the rating officers shall transmit to the superintendent of schools a yearly report, assigning all teachers under their supervision to Classes A, B, and C.

2. Yearly ratings shall be made in the light of and, in general, in accordance with the ratings on Form 1 which have been made and filed during the course of the year. In case the occasional ratings and the yearly rating are not in accord it shall be necessary for the supervising officer to adduce competent reasons for his final decision.

3. In cases where ratings on Form 1 have been made by assistant supervisors the heads of their departments shall prepare the yearly rating and shall be responsible therefor.

4. Supervising officers shall be given to understand that the yearly rating shall not be made mechanically from the occasional ratings. It is intended that a high or a low rating on some one heading may influence to a marked extent the yearly rating of a teacher. This yearly rating is to be the result of an intelligent evaluation of his own previous ratings by the rating officer rather than an arbitrary arithmetical average.

*Final Rating: Form 3*

1. The yearly ratings of supervisors and principals shall then be entered on Form 3, provided that the visiting standard for judgment has been met. This standard requires two visits of fifteen minutes in length before a supervisor or principal may place a teacher in Class B. Four visits of the same length are required before a teacher may be placed in Class A or Class C.

2. The final ratings of each teacher shall be made by combining the ratings which the various supervising officers who are thus qualified have given her. This shall be done by the superintendent of schools or by one of his assistants working under his authority and responsibility. Not more than two such assistants may be designated to formulate these final ratings. Final ratings for all junior and senior high school teachers shall be made by one person. One person shall make all of the final ratings for teachers in the elementary schools.

3. Assistants designated to formulate final ratings shall be required to acquaint themselves as completely as possible with the work and qualifications of all teachers and of all rating officers in their departments. Such assistants will not, however, make yearly ratings of the teachers in their departments.

4. Yearly ratings made by building principals shall be considered as approximately equivalent to the weight of the combined ratings of all other supervisors.

5. The superintendent of schools, or one of his designated assistants working under his authority, shall enter a rating of A, B, or C in the proper space on Form 3, and a report of the final rating of each teacher shall be filed in the office of the superintendent of schools not later than May 15. This rating shall be made in the light of the final rating officer's understanding of both rater and rated, and he shall be held responsible for his decisions.

6. Form 3 shall be executed in duplicate, one copy being filed in the office of the superintendent with the copies of Form 1, the second copy being mailed to the teacher concerned.

7. Teachers who are dissatisfied with their final ratings may appeal directly to the final rating officer. This officer may, in such cases, require further statements from supervisors and principals. For his own evaluation of these ratings he is responsible to the Board of Education, which will naturally constitute the final court of appeal in all matters connected with the rating system.

Form 1 carries the items of teacher excellence which follow. Space is provided for rating the qualities indicated by the five main

headings, the subheadings being used only in explaining a rating of A or C. Blanks to identify the teacher concerned, to record the date and the length of the visit, and to state whether or not a conference was held in regard to the rating are also included on this form. All of the rating forms have been reduced to a convenient filing size.

### I. Instructional skill

1. Does her daily work show preparation and thought ?
  - a) Does she know specific aim of subject ?
  - b) Does she know ultimate aim of each lesson ?
  - c) Is she able to place central truth in lesson before pupils ?
  - d) Is her information accurate ?
  - e) Does she use good English ?
2. Does she use skill in conducting drill exercises ?
3. Is she definite in her instructions ?
4. Are her pupils responsive ?
5. Does she stimulate thought ?

### II. Pupil achievement

1. Do intelligence and achievement tests show that her pupils have made sufficient progress ?
2. Are her pupils forming right habits of study ?
3. Are her pupils gaining in power of thought and expression ?
4. Are her pupils growing in consideration of others and the school ?
5. Do results of work show that she is adapted to grade or subject she teaches ?

### III. Administrative ability

1. Is her room neat ?
2. Is there a cheerful, orderly spirit of work in the room ?
3. Are her records and reports satisfactory ?
4. Is routine economically and systematically organized ?
5. Does she maintain good order and discipline ?
6. Do her outside duties and pleasures interfere with her school life ?

### IV. Professional attitude

1. Is she loyal to co-workers ?
2. Does she co-operate with her co-workers in school activities ?
3. Is she interested in the general physical and moral welfare of her pupils ?
4. Does she benefit by suggestion ?
5. Does she show continuous professional growth ?
6. Does she participate in and contribute to educational gatherings ?
7. Does she seek general information through travel or current interests ?



#### V. Personal equipment

1. Is her general appearance favorable?
  - a) Is she neat and clean?
  - b) Does she dress appropriately?
  - c) Is she thoughtful of her own posture and manner?
2. Is her health good?
3. Is her voice agreeable?
4. Is she dependable?
5. Has she a sense of humor?
6. Has she a sense of fairness?
7. Is she tactful and sympathetic in dealings with pupils, colleagues, and patrons?
8. Can she adapt herself to unusual circumstances?
  - a) Is she resourceful?
  - b) Does she use initiative?
9. Is she pleasantly and effectively aggressive in conversation and conference with pupils, patrons, and supervisors?

Form 2 has blanks for the supervisor's yearly rating of all of the teachers in his building or department. Blanks for teachers' names, their buildings or departments, and the number of standard visits on which the ratings are based are also provided. These yearly ratings and the number of standard visits are also entered for the various supervisors on Form 3. They are followed by blanks for the final rating officer's combination of the yearly ratings and for his signature.

The committee came early to the conclusion that teacher rating is an outgrowth of supervision or, perhaps, an activity essential to it. Criticisms of earlier rating plans pointed to the fact that the various items on which the judgment of teaching merit should rest were not seriously involved. The matters which demanded particular attention from the new system were the insurance of a proper visitation basis for rating, the adjustment of ratings given by different supervisors, provision for entire frankness in giving ratings, and the final localization of responsibility for the teacher's ultimate ranking.

The rating system, accordingly, is preceded by a basic provision for more thorough and more definite supervision, especially in the upper grades and in the high school. Present plans for supervision have provided adequately for the grade teachers but have added only

the supervision of a busy assistant superintendent to that of the building principal in the case of all teachers of regular high-school subjects. Believing in the reliability of several judgments as opposed to the judgment of a single person, the committee has provided that supervision be extended to the teachers in the junior and senior high schools on much the same basis as supervision is now given to the teachers in the grades.

This supervision occurs in definite instructional contacts with the teacher in her own school situation. It is headed up in a rating which is given immediately to the teacher and for which the supervisor may be held instantly responsible. The special subject teacher will find it necessary to establish a different contact with the classroom teachers than is secured through days spent in teaching from class to class. The principal who relies upon mere inspectional activity will find it difficult to stand up under a system which makes such a clear demand for supervision and places the responsibility for such supervision directly upon his shoulders. Such implications will perhaps cause considerable change in the supervising tactics of many principals and supervisors and should make for vitalizing contacts the supervisory value of which will exceed that resulting from the rating system as such.

It was not felt that percentile weightings should be allotted to the various supervising officers. So far as possible, an attempt was made to allow the operation of administrative intelligence in the final summation of ratings instead of placing the final ratings at the arithmetical mercy of an adding machine. The provision for the greater part of a teacher's rating to depend on the judgment of her principal is due to his greater familiarity with the work in question and to the scope of the work which falls to his supervision. This provision demands that a stabilizing agency be invoked to prevent the unchecked operation of different levels of judgment.

The provision for the final consolidation of ratings by the superintendent of schools or by his deputies covers this point and at the same time makes for the localization of responsibility. If the two deputies provided for in the rating system are employed, each will be responsible for the annual rating of some 350 teachers. This number is large enough to insure a wide view of the matter and still

keep the problem where it can be handled by a well-informed assistant. The fact that the occasional ratings have all been made known as they were given leaves only the supervisors' yearly ratings and the final annual ratings to be reported to the teachers. While it may be necessary in some instances to consider the methods used in summing up the occasional ratings made by the supervisors, the principal matter in point at the close of the year will be the final combination of ratings. This responsibility is placed in the office of the superintendent of schools.

It may be noted that the system makes no provision for a connection between the teacher's rating and her salary. It was thought that the system would receive a fairer trial if the salary question were left to be attacked later—after the justice which may inhere in the system is brought in a convincing manner to the teachers who have been and who will be rated. The Duluth salary schedule is due to undergo revision during the next year, and it appeared quite useless to attempt to correlate a rating system the operation of which is as yet unproved with a salary schedule which is in a state of flux.

The aim of the Duluth plan for rating teachers is to devise methods of measuring, conserving, and enhancing the demonstrated ability of the teachers within our schools. It is held that the system must prove itself both to teachers and to administrators before it may properly operate to change salaries or to classify teachers with any degree of finality. The system is being placed in tentative operation with the hope that it may, after trial and amendment, prove itself to be a beneficent factor in the intelligent operation of the Duluth schools.